

The image is a dense collage of vintage comic book covers, primarily from the mid-20th century. The covers are arranged in a grid-like fashion, overlapping slightly. Titles visible include "Superman", "Jetta", "Mystery Comics", "Fantastic Tales", "Cosmo Cat", "Startling Comics", "Strange Mysteries", "Daring Adventures", "Famous Funnies", "Hilarious Raucous", "Teen-Age Sweetheart", "Duck", "Eerie", "Exciting Comics", "Casper Cat", and "Barnyard Comics". The art style is characteristic of classic American comics, with bold colors and dynamic illustrations. Overlaid on top of this collage is a large, dark purple speech bubble with a thick black outline. Inside the bubble, the text "WEB COMIC UNIVERSE.COM" is written in a large, white, stylized font with a slight shadow effect, making it stand out prominently against the colorful background.

FRANKENSTEIN

10c

SUMMER
No. 19



JOHN
BROOKER

DEMONS? BAH! SUCH THINGS EXIST ONLY IN TORTURED DREAMS! WE KNOW THAT! BUT WHO IS TO SAY WHERE DREAMS LEAVE OFF AND REALITY BEGINS? WHO IS TO SAY WHAT IS REAL-- AND WHAT IS...

NIGHTMARE

LISTEN, GORDON! LISTEN! YOU CAN HEAR HIM! BREATHING! HE'S DOWN THERE! SLEEPING! AND YOU CALLED ME MAD! NOW, WILL YOU BELIEVE!

NO! I CAN'T BELIEVE! I--I DON'T CARE!



IT WOULD BE SO EASY TO SAY THAT IT WAS ALL A DREAM! BUT I SAY THAT IT WAS NOT A DREAM! THAT NAMELESS HORROR WAS REAL! AS REAL AS CAIN LOCKMAN WAS ON THAT NIGHT ONLY A FEW MONTHS AGO!

CAIN? YOU--YOU!

IT IS YOU, MAN, DON'T YOU KNOW ME? IT'S JOHN! JOHN GORDON! YOUR AGENT! I'VE BEEN POUNDING ON YOUR DOOR FOR TEN MINUTES!

I--HEARD YOU. BUT I HOPED YOU'D GO AWAY. I KNOW YOU, GORDON! WHAT DO YOU WANT?

WANT! CAIN, WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? I HAD TO WALK ALL THE WAY FROM TOWN! NO ONE WOULD DRIVE ME! AREN'T YOU GOING TO ASK ME IN?

NO! YOU CAN'T COME IN! YOU MUSTN'T! YOU'VE GOT TO GO BACK!



I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A PATIENT MAN, BUT IT HAD TAKEN ME SIX MONTHS TO FIND CAIN LOCKMAN, AND I WAS WET AND TIRED!

GO BACK? I'LL GRANT ANY ARTIST HIS TEMPERAMENTAL PECULIARITIES, LOCKMAN, BUT IF YOU THINK I'M WALKING SIX MILES BACK TO THE STATION IN THIS DOWNPOUR, YOU'RE CRAZY!



SIX MONTHS AGO CAIN LOCKMAN HAD HAD A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN, RECOVERED... AND THEN DISAPPEARED! BUT AS I FOLLOWED HIM DOWN THAT DARK CORRIDOR I WONDERED IF HE HAD RECOVERED?

YOU'LL HAVE TO LEAVE IN THE MORNING! AS SOON AS THE SUN IS UP, HE WON'T BOTHER YOU THEN! HE'LL BE ASLEEP! HE SLEEPS DURING THE DAY!

HE? YOU MEAN THERE'S SOMEONE BESIDES YOU IN THIS MAUSOLEUM?



WELL, I'LL BE... WHY THIS PLACE LOOKS LIKE SOMETHING RIGHT OUT OF THE DAYS OF COTTON MATHER! BR-R... CAIN, WHY ON...

YOU... YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE COME IN! BUT NOW THAT YOU HAVE... COME WITH ME! QUICKLY! IT'S ALMOST MIDNIGHT!



BUT THERE WAS NO ANSWER TO THAT! HE LED THE WAY TO A ROOM, A TINY, CELL-LIKE ROOM OF FILTH AND SHADOW!

YOU WILL SLEEP HERE WITH ME IN THIS ROOM! BUT YOU MUSTN'T LEAVE IT! NO MATTER WHAT YOU HEAR! NO MATTER WHAT YOU SEE!

CAIN, WHAT IS ALL THIS? I... I'VE SPENT MONTHS LOOKING FOR YOU... AND YOU TALK... GIBBERISH! I'M YOUR AGENT! REMEMBER? I SELL YOUR PAINTINGS!



ONLY FOR SIX MONTHS THERE HAVE BEEN NO PAINTINGS! LOOK, THIS PLACE AND THAT GET-UP OF YOURS IS OKAY! AFTER ALL, YOU DO PAINT THE WEIRD AND BIZARRE! BUT I'M HERE TO TALK BUSINESS.

MAYBE YOU'VE SEEN SOME OF CAIN LOCKMAN'S PICTURES! BLACK LANDSCAPES, TORTURED FIGURES. HE WAS ALWAYS PECULIAR! BUT HIS WORK SOLD!

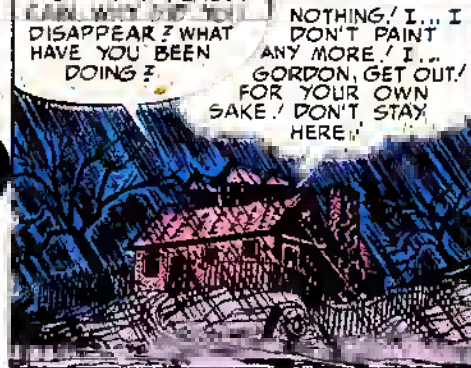
IF YOU HADN'T TOLD ME ONCE THAT YOUR FAMILY OWNED A HOUSE IN MASSACHUSETTS, I'D NEVER HAVE FOUND THIS PLACE!

CAIN, WHY DID YOU DISAPPEAR? WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING?

NOTHING! I... I DON'T PAINT ANY MORE! I... GORDON, GET OUT! FOR YOUR OWN SAKE! DON'T STAY HERE!

NOW, WAIT A MINUTE! YOU STOPPED PAINTING? YOU COULD NO MORE STOP PAINTING THAN YOU COULD STOP BREATHING! I CAME HERE TO SEE YOUR WORK AND I'M GOING TO!

YOU... ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT! STAY IF YOU LIKE! BUT I HAVE NO PAINTING TO SHOW YOU! I... YOU SLEEP HERE!



HE WAS ILL / ILL AND HALF-HYSTERICAL / THAT'S WHY I DIDN'T PRESS HIM / TOMORROW WAS ANOTHER DAY / I DROPPED ONTO THE COUCH, DOZED AND LATER...

WHAT... I MUST HAVE DOZED OFF! IT... CAIN! WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU DOING?

NOTHING! NOTHING! I... GO TO BED!



BUT LOCKMAN WASN'T THERE / I DRESSED AND WANDERED OUT / I WALKED, EXPLORED, WITH THE SOUND OF THE RAIN / LIKE THE TAP OF SKELETON FINGERS ON MY EARDRUMS / AND UPSTAIRS...

SO THIS IS WHERE HE WORKS / I MIGHT HAVE KNOWN HE WAS LYING / HE GOT PAINT IN HIS VEINS / BUT THAT CANVAS... HE'S NEVER ATTEMPTED ANYTHING THAT HUGE BEFORE!

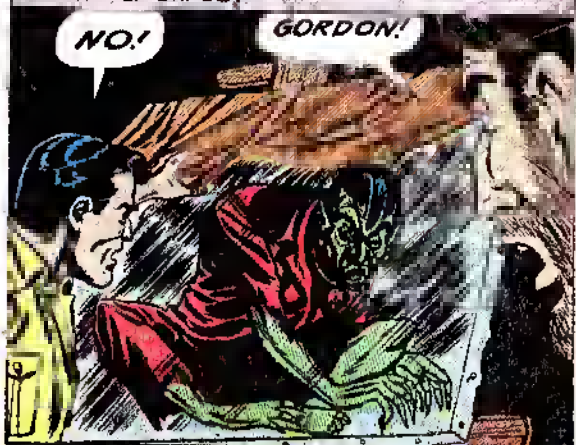


I WAS DOG Tired! I WENT TO BED / BUT I DIDN'T SLEEP WELL / I HEARD THINGS / I SWEAR IT! SOMEONE, SOMETHING, PROWLING AROUND OUR DOOR / BUT IN THE MORNING...

I MUST HAVE BEEN DREAMING / AND NO WONDER / THIS PLACE LOOKS EVEN WORSE IN DAYLIGHT THAN IT DID LAST NIGHT / CAIN...



HOW COULD I RESIST! I PULLED THE COVERINGS AWAY / THEY FELL TO THE FLOOR! / AND, STARK, SOUL-SHATTERING HORROR WRAPPED ME IN ITS CLAMMY EMBRACE!



NO!

GORDON!

FOR AN INSTANT... IT SEEMED... BUT THERE CAN'T BE... THERE NEVER WAS A... A THING LIKE THAT!

I... I WARNED YOU! I TOLD YOU TO STAY IN YOUR ROOM! I WARNED YOU! YOU FOOL! GET OUT! GET OUT!

I... NO! CAIN, THIS IS INSANE! YOU'VE ALWAYS PUT A TOUCH OF THE STRANGE IN YOUR PICTURES, BUT THIS IS MONSTROUS! THIS TIME YOU'VE GONE TOO FAR! THERE'S A LIMIT!

THERE IS NO LIMIT TO THE REALITY AN ARTIST CAN PORTRAY IF HE WILL! I WARNED YOU! BUT YOU HAD TO SNEAK, TO TRY! SO NOW YOU'VE SEEN IT! MY MASTERPIECE!

REALITY! YOU CALL THIS... THIS BLASPHEMY, REALITY! IT'S... IT'S GOOD, I'LL GRANT YOU! B-BUT... PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO BE DISGUSTED. CAIN, YOU'RE ILL!

YES, GORDON! I'M ILL! ILL WITH THE MEALY-MOUTHED PLATITUDES OF FOOLS LIKE YOU! ILL WITH A SUGAR-COATED WORLD THAT WON'T FACE TRUTH! IT IS NEVER DISGUSTING!



MY PICTURE HORRIFIES YOU,
SO YOU TRY TO EXPLAIN
IT! SUCH THINGS DO NOT
EXIST! SUCH HORRORS
ARE ONLY IN THE BRAINS
OF MADMEN! YOU FOOL!
YOU POOR, BLIND FOOL!
THIS PICTURE WAS
PAINTED FROM LIFE!



LOOK OUT
THERE! THAT'S
GIBBET HILL!
WHERE THEY
BURNED WITCHES
AND WARLOCKS!
BECAUSE THEY
KNEW THAT
SUCH THINGS
DO EXIST!

CAIN! STOP IT! YOU...
YOU'RE RAVING!
THIS HOUSE, THIS
ATMOSPHERE OF
DECAY, YOUR
BREAKDOWN...
THEY'VE ALL
COMBINED, YOU'VE
LET THE DECAY
CREEP INTO
YOUR MIND!



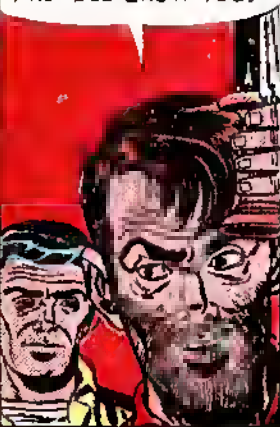
"SUDDENLY, HE WAS QUIET! ALL
BUT HIS EYES! THEY WERE ALIVE!
ALIVE WITH INNER HORRORS I
COULD ONLY GUESS AT!"

SO YOU THINK
THAT, TOO? WHY
DO YOU THINK
NO ONE WOULD
DRIVE YOU
OUT HERE!
BECAUSE
THEY KNOW!
THEY' KNEW
JUST AS THEIR
ANCESTORS KNEW!

NO ONE WOULD
DRIVE ME OUT
BECAUSE IT
WAS LATE
AND RAINING!
THERE'S NOTHING
HERE TO BE
AFRAID OF,
EXCEPT
WHAT'S IN
YOUR MIND!



NOTHING, GORDON?
NOTHING! ALL RIGHT!
COME WITH ME IF YOU
HAVE THE COURAGE!
AND I'LL SHOW YOU!



HE RAN OUT AND DOWN THE STAIRS LIKE A MAN
POSSESSED! AND BECAUSE I WAS AFRAID THAT
HE MIGHT DO HIMSELF HARM, I FOLLOWED! TO
THE CELLAR... AND BEYOND!

YOU DIDN'T
KNOW THAT MY FAMILY HAS OWNED THIS
HOUSE FOR TWO CENTURIES, DID YOU,
GORDON? YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT ONE
OF THEM WAS BURNED AS A WARLOCK
ON GIBBET HILL!



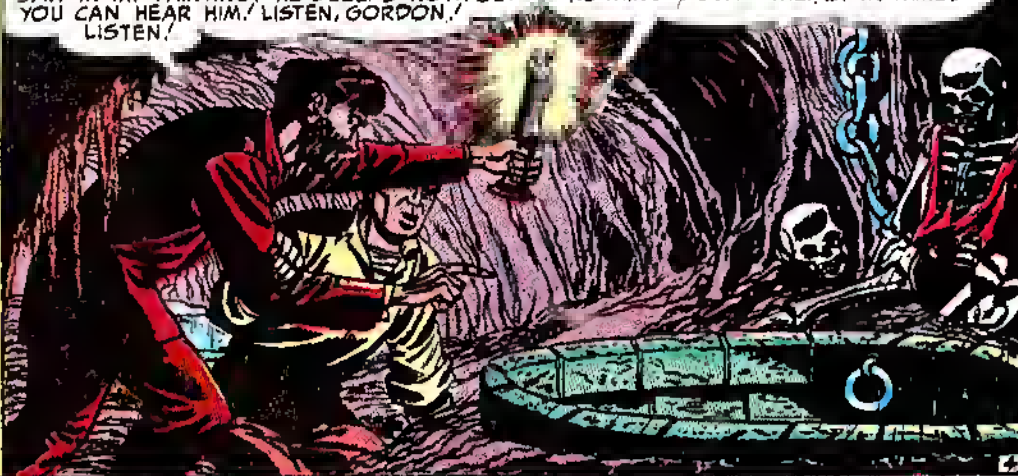
THEY SAID HE HAD A
DEMON, GORDON! THAT
HE BUILT THIS TUNNEL
FOR IT! FOR TWO
CENTURIES IT'S BEEN
CLOSED UP! BUT I
OPENED IT!



"THAT
TUNNEL
SEEMED
ENDLESS!
IT
WAS
WET,
COLD,
BLACK!
THE
LOCKMAN
RAVED
ON AND
ON! I
WANTED
TO
TURN
BACK!
BUT I
DIDN'T
DARE!
AND
THEN...
WE
WERE
THERE!"

LOOK, GORDON! LOOK! LOOK AT THAT PIT!
WHERE HE STAYS BY DAY! THE THING YOU
SAW IN MY PAINTING! HE SLEEPS NOW, BUT
YOU CAN HEAR HIM! LISTEN, GORDON!
LISTEN!

CAIN, GET HOLD OF YOURSELF! IT'S
JUST AN OLD CISTERN! THERE'S
NOTHING DOWN THERE! NOTHING!



I SWEAR I HEARD IT THEN! A RASPING, BREATHING SOUND! DESPITE MYSELF I LEANED OVER THAT PIT OF HORROR! AND THE STENCH! THE STENCH!

WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S HORRIBLE! LIKE THE ODOR OF A HUNDRED DECAYING BODIES! LET'S GET AWAY FROM HERE!

BUT WHY, GORDON? WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF? IT'S STILL DAYLIGHT! HE ONLY WALKS AT NIGHT! BESIDES, SUCH THINGS DON'T EXIST! YOU SAID SO!



NOW YOU KNOW! NOW YOU CAN GO! NOW YOU CAN LEAVE ME IN PEACE TO FINISH MY PAINTING!

NO! I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE! NOT UNLESS YOU COME WITH ME! CAIN, YOU'RE MY FRIEND! I CAN'T LEAVE YOU ALONE TO GO ON WITH THIS... THIS MADNESS!



SO YOU WILL STAY! ALL RIGHT, GORDON! BUT WHATEVER HAPPENS, IT WILL BE ON YOUR OWN HEAD! REMEMBER THAT! IT WILL BE ON YOUR OWN HEAD!



HE WENT BACK AND I DID NOT SEE LOCKMAN AGAIN THAT DAY! HE WAS UPSTAIRS, WORKING! BUT AT SUNDOWN...

CAIN, WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE? WHAT IS THAT STUFF?

WOLF'SBANE, GORDON! IT GROWS WILD ON GIBBET HILL! WOLF'SBANE TO KEEP HIM OUT! NO DEMON OR WITCH OR THING OF NIGHT CAN PASS THE FLOWERING GREEN!



HE WAS QUOTING FROM SOME ANCIENT TOME ON BLACK MAGIC! LOCKMAN WAS INSANE! I WAS CERTAIN, THEN.

TO GET IN! BUT HE CAN'T! HE CAN'T PASS THE WOLF'SBANE! THE OLD ONES KNEW! THEY USED IT, TOO! BUT WE MUST STAY IN THIS ROOM! WE MUST!

OF COURSE, CAIN! OF... OF COURSE!



I DIDN'T GO TO BED! HOW COULD I SLEEP IN THAT ACCURSED HOUSE! I WAS NERVOUS, TENSE! PERHAPS THAT WAS WHY I HEARD... WHAT I DID!

SCRAPING! THE SAME SOUND I HEARD... FROM THE PIT! AND IT'S... COMING NEARER!

GORDON, IT'S HIM! CAN'T YOU HEAR HIM?



I HEAR SOMETHING! BUT I'M GOING TO PROVE TO YOU ONCE AND FOR ALL THAT IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK! I'M GOING OUT THERE!

NO! YOU FOOL! YOU BLIND, UNBELIEVING FOOL! CAN YOU FIGHT A THING THAT HAS EXISTED SINCE TIME BEGAN! CAN YOU STAND UP TO THAT?



I PUSHED HIM ASIDE, HE WAS SLIGHT, WASTED / IT WAS NO EFFORT / BUT I NEVER GOT TO THE DOOR!

OH-H!

WHAM



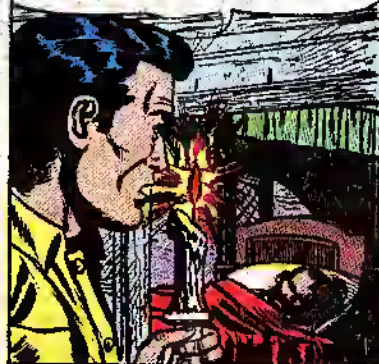
IT'S ALL HAZY AFTER THAT! THE NIGHT MUST HAVE PASSED, BECAUSE ONCE I OPENED MY EYES AND IT WAS DAY! BUT THEN, SOMEHOW, IT WAS NIGHT AGAIN...

SICK... I'M... SICK... CRAZY... FOOL! HE'S... MAD! AND I'M WEAK... HE MIGHT... KILL ME!

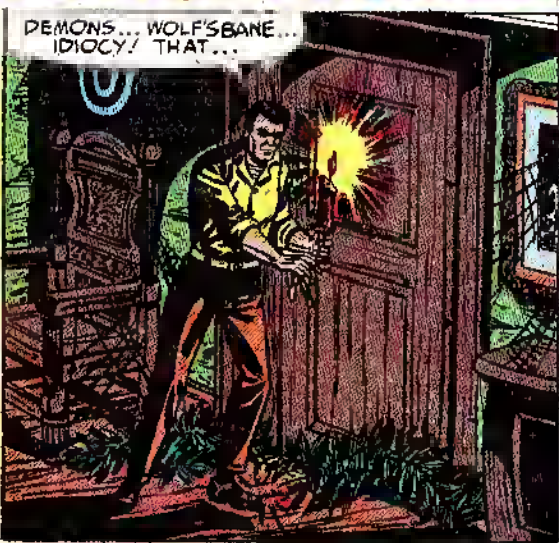


I COULD FEEL IT / THE FEVER IN MY BODY / BURNING / BUT I HAD TO GET AWAY! I HAD TO BEFORE THAT MADMAN KILLED ME!

HE'S ASLEEP! NOW... NOW IS THE TIME / I CAN... SLIP OUT... WHILE HE SLEEPS!



DEMONS... WOLF'SBANE... IDIOCY! THAT...



AND THEN I HEARD IT AGAIN / THE SCRAPING / I TURNED... AND IT WAS THERE / AT THE END OF THAT CORRIDOR / IT WAS... IT WAS...



NO... NO!

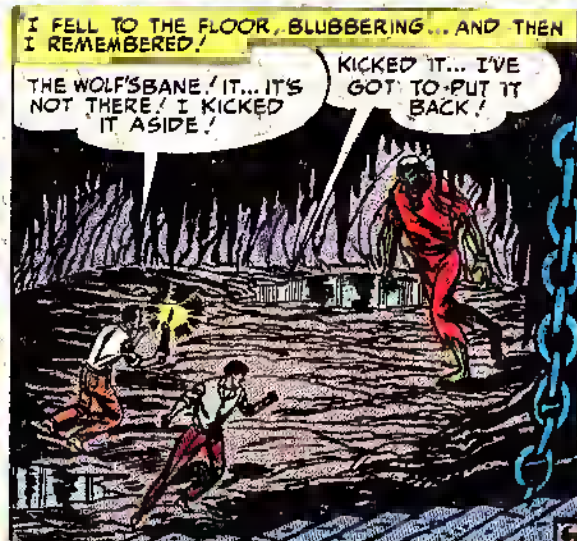
GORDON! WHAT IS IT? WHAT, IT'S HIM! GET BACK / INSIDE / QUICKLY! WE'LL BE SAFER INSIDE! HE CAN'T PASS THE WOLF'SBANE!



I FELL TO THE FLOOR, BLUBBERING... AND THEN I REMEMBERED!

THE WOLF'SBANE! IT... IT'S NOT THERE! I KICKED IT ASIDE!

KICKED IT... I'VE GOT TO PUT IT BACK!



HE RAN TO THE DOOR, BUT HE NEVER FOUND THE WOLF'SBANE. THERE WASN'T TIME! I SAW WHAT HAPPENED! I TELL YOU I SAW! CAIN, SCREAMED... AND SCREAMED... AND SCREAMED!

NO! NO! NO!

CAIN! CAIN!



I'VE GOT TO GET OUT! THE DOOR TO THE OUTSIDE! WHICH WAY IS IT? WHICH WAY! I'VE GOT TO...

OH-H-H-



SOMEHOW I STAGGERED TO MY FEET. I FOUND THE DOOR THAT LED TO THAT BIG, HOLLOWLY ECHOING HALL. THEN I WAS OUTSIDE! OUTSIDE WITH THE BLESSED AIR CLEAN AND COOL ON MY FACE! I RAN, BLINDLY, UNTIL I COULD RUN NO MORE!

I DON'T REMEMBER WHO IT WAS THAT FOUND ME! THERE WERE JUST FACES, KIND, NORMAL FACES...

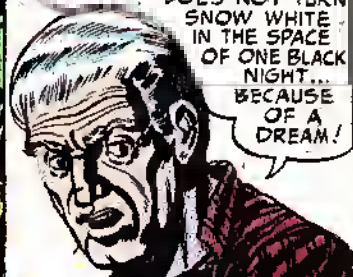
POOR FELLOW! HE MUST HAVE HAD A HORRIBLE TIME! BUT AT LEAST HE'S STILL ALIVE! BEATS ME HOW HE GOT OUT OF THAT INFERNO, THOUGH! TOO BAD THAT ARTIST... LOCKMAN... WASN'T AS LUCKY!

THEY TOLD ME, AFTERWARD, IT WAS ALL GONE! THE HOUSE, LOCKMAN, THE PAINTING, THE ENTRANCE TO THE TUNNEL, EVERYTHING! THEY SAID I WAS ILL, THAT I ONLY DREAMED WHAT I SAW!

SAFE! I'M... SAFE!



BUT A MAN DOES NOT GROW OLD BETWEEN DARK AND DAWN BECAUSE HE IS ILL! A MAN'S HAIR DOES NOT TURN SNOW WHITE IN THE SPACE OF ONE BLACK NIGHT... BECAUSE OF A DREAM!



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